









UE 815



To Dr. Alice G. Masaryk
Respectfully inscribed
by
Maricopa
12/8/91



May

A ROMANTIC POEM

by

KAREL HYNEK MACHA



Translated from the Czech by

RODERICK A. GINSBURG

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H. H. Machra







KAREL HYNEK MACHA
THE PASSIONATE REBEL
(1810 - 1836)

"I am a volcano of Iceland.
All around me ice and snow,
but within me eternal fire."
Macha's Note Book (1833-1835).

Karel Hynek Macha, who was destined to become the first Czech poet in the original Greek sense of the word, that is, a maker of "things of beauty" of an everlasting joyfulness, was born of poor parents on the 16th of November, 1810, in Prague. During his student years, both in the gymnasium and the university, Macha devoted much of his leisure to the reading of romantic poetry, especially that of German and Polish authors. Since 1831 he became one of the most zealous followers of Joseph Jungmann, at that time professor at the University of Prague. Jungmann was one of the acknowledged leaders who strived to bring about the rebirth of the Czech nation from the violently germanizing rule of Habsburgs. It is, therefore, not surprising at all that Macha, whose first attempts at poetry were composed in German as "Versuche des Ignaz Macha" (1829), henceforth chose his native Czech language as the vehicle for poetical expression. In 1836, the year when "May" was published, Macha was graduated from the law school of the University of Prague with great honors, and he entered the office of a justiciary in Litomerice. That year, at the peak of his creative abilities, Macha contracted pneumonia while helping to fight a fire and died November 5th, 1836, at the age of 26 years.

The poet Macha stands as a unique figure on the threshold of modern Czech literature. Within a brief space of time, he succeeded in accomplishing a far reaching and valuable deed: the awakening of the Czech poetry and poetic imagination to new, higher spheres.

Up to his appearance in the literary arena, poetry in Bohemia was considered a convenient medium for the expression of moralist and didactic teachings. Macha was the first Czech poet to create new realms of lyrical vision. His work showed exquisite sensibility and an elaborate musical rendering of ideas.

If we seek a comparison of Macha's creative qualities with those of other poets, the work of John Keats naturally suggests itself as that of a spirit basically akin to the nature of Macha's poetry.

Not unlike Keats, Macha was of an eagerly sensuous disposition, and as the happy author of "Endymion" he could have asserted that "from Nature and her overflowing soul he had received so much that all his thoughts were steeped in feeling."

The force of Byron's influence upon Macha, by which it is sometimes attempted to solve the existence of romantic elements in Macha's literary output, can, if at all, be explained as a question of coincidences of time, but does not bear a strictly psychological analysis. True, Macha was a great lover of the poems of the proud Lord of Newstead Abbey, but Byron exercised an influence upon him more by his exotic personality, than through the intellectual qualities of his works. And so the most romantic element of Macha's power of feeling, a certain morbidity of a constantly recurring conception of death, his outright nihilistic notions of life and his horror of the Unknown, differ fundamentally by their elegiac passiveness from the tempestuous and titanic pathos of Byron's pessimism.

Macha's "Diary for the Year 1835" is typical of his philosophical pessimism and desolate solipsism on one hand, and of violent outbursts of unbound sensuality and thirst of carnal love on the other. This would bring him much nearer to the theories and practices of the German

romanticists, principally to Novalis of the "blaue Blume" observance. As Novalis in his "Heinrich von Ofterdingen" and in his beautiful "Hymnen an die Nacht" endeavored to create a "new poetry of poetry," highly elevated beyond the earthly striving, so Macha throughout his entire work tried to show that "art is the victory of spirit over nature and that the working of poetry is shown in a slow liberation of slaves from the grip of the matter. Slaves are we men."

At the same time, we cannot help noticing a very marked vein of glowing Slavonic sensitiveness and dreaminess in his work, and his "frightened feverish imagination," as he characterized it himself in one of his letters, may be directly traced to the influences of the Polish literature, especially to the two poets of the sister nation whom he most loved and revered: to Adam Mickiewicz and Julius Slowacki.

When four years after Goethe's death, in 1836, Macha's "romance in verses"—the lyrico-epic poem "May"—was published it was a literary event of prime importance. It may be said, perhaps, that the poem, or as the author preferred to call it, his "romance," lacks in solid construction of its plot and clear development of its main theme, but it cannot be denied that the absence of those qualities is more than amply compensated for by the beauty of the poetic expression, by a delicate shading of rich colors and by the use of musical sounds and effects which hitherto were wholly unknown to and unheard of in Czech poetry. The great historian of the Czech nation, Francis Palacky, was one of the first critics to recognize and appreciate "Macha's egregious phantasy and splendid power of purely pictorial seeing."

DR. JOHN J. REICHMAN.

THE AUTHOR'S OWN ESTIMATE OF "MAY"

"The chief purpose of this poem is to celebrate the Maytime beauty of Nature; to accomplish this aim more easily, the Maytime of Nature is set against varying periods of human life. Thus, for instance, in the first part, the sedate, etc., love in nature is set against the wild, passionate, uncontrollable love of man; likewise other qualities of Maytime Nature are set against corresponding periods of human life in other parts. The story, then, or the action of the Poem, is not to be considered as the most important part of the poem, for only those parts of the story were used in the poem that were essential to the attainment of the main purpose."



(*) On the last page of the first edition of "Maj" the author inserted an "Explanation" of this line as follows: "It was late in the afternoon when I attended the funeral of one of my friends at the Old-town cemetery. The gravedigger, partly covering the casket, remarked: 'They'll not bring any one else tonight, so this one can stand up and guard the place.' Upon further inquiry, he gave me this explanation. There is an old superstition that the last one buried on a cemetery must be left standing as a guard, and must remain standing every night till somebody else is buried, who then takes his place. In this manner, no cemetery is left without a guard, and it happens that on the cemeteries of small, isolated communities, the dead man is often left standing for several years."

TRANSLATOR'S REMARKS

In presenting this Czech "Romantic Poem" to the English reading public, I feel the need of stressing the musical rather than the poetic beauty of the work. As one reads and re-reads the musical lines of this work in the original, with the recurring refrains of repetition, one is reminded of an operatic libretto. I hope that I have succeeded in keeping some of this operatic atmosphere in the translation, for Prof. J. R. Hulbert, who read the earliest draft of this translation, remarked at the conclusion of the first intermezzo:

"If this is really like the original, that is more like an opera-libretto than what we think of as poetry. I wonder if the diction in the original has more suggestiveness."

The poet was severely censured for this same lack of concreteness, for that hazy emotional rather than concretely pictorial effect, and this apparent defect no doubt retarded the recognition of the poet's true greatness. But in criticizing the poet, let us bear in mind that he had no precedent in his own language to fall upon, . . . that he is, in a marked sense, the founder of Czech poetry . . . that the phraseology is of his own invention . . . that he is a pioneer and as such, not as thorough as his followers could be. . . . The musical element of Macha's masterpiece receives extended notice in F. V. Krejci's "Karel Hynek Macha," and I beg leave to quote several excerpts that throw an explanatory light on much that otherwise appears obscure. Speaking of the musical structure of the poem, "May," Krejci says:

"Yes, we can justly recall here a symphony—that expresses in its movements something of human destiny, and of a picture of life, and whose every movement is a crystallization of a definite feeling, a definite mood or the pictorization of a definite scene. This identical character of symphonic movements may be seen in the several parts of 'May.' Thus the glorious opening quatrain that is repeated with minor variations at the close of the first, third and fourth part, what is this but a basic theme, resounding in its repetition with the eloquence of an outstanding motive?"

In another part the biographer and student of Macha compares the several parts of the poem to classical operatic or symphonic works and says:

"The opening description of the Spring evening:

'The tranquil moss sighed love's lament,
Love's sorrow shammed the blooming tree,
A nightingale sang love's melody. . . .'

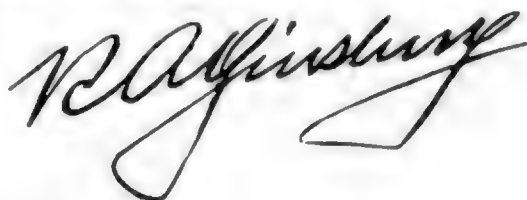
this moves with the playful flow of a sweetly yearning rondo. Similarly conceived is the night prison scene, in the style of a ballad-nocturne. The midnight Intermezzo is wholly related with its mood to the nocturnal visions of Chopin and Schuman. The second intermezzo, 'Where the mountain ranges tower,' would be almost worthless without the rhythmic motive, 'Our Mighty Leader Perished.' Musical inspiration dominates herein completely."

In his concluding remarks about the musical formation of the poem, Krejci pays attention to the insertion of the poet's name, "Hynek," in the last line and interprets this as indicative of the poet's subjective attitude. This, according to F. V. Krejci, is an admission that throughout the poem it is the poet rather than the fictitious characters that are speaking, and once again let me quote Krejci's remarks:

". . . . And wholly musically, the poem concludes with the original chords of the familiar quatrain, with the basic theme which, returning at the end, rounds out the poem and gives it unity of thought and mood. But the voice of the turtle-dove that formerly called for Geraldine and William, now calls for Hynek — the poet's name — a symbolic motive of his subjectivity, a purely musical formation that resounds in the last stanza of the poem to indicate how much its creator participates in it with his heart and his personal destiny."

All this should be borne in mind when reading the translation of Macha's "May" and when criticizing or condemning the poetic quality and worth of this pride of the Czech literary world. The poem must be read with constant reference to one's own inner life, read for its emotion rather than its plot . . . for its music rather than its prosody. In the words of Prof. V. Vittinger, whose edition I have used in the preparation of this translation:

". . . . read yourself into his (Macha's) works carefully and you will realize then that in this famous poem 'May' there is more than just amorous cooing and robberous romanticism . . . that through its lines Life itself speaks to you—that life as it appears to man in his dreams and as we meet with it in reality. . . . Blazing beauty combines therein with blackest horror—such is Life—mystery, darkness,—a beautiful Night. Read carefully, adoringly—not with the eye but with the heart. . . ."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Vittinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

1247 South Elmwood Avenue
Berwyn, Illinois



PART ONE

T was late at eve . . . the first of May,
A night in May . . . 'twas time for love.
A love lure sang the turtle-dove,
Where scented pine groves stretched away.
The tranquil moss sighed love's lament;
Love's sorrow shammed the blooming tree,
A nightingale sang love's melody,
While a rose replied with love's sweet scent.

The lake, hid where the thicket reared,
Expressed its grief in a muffled sound,
Where banks entwined it all around;
The suns of other worlds appeared
And strayed across the azure spheres,
Gleaming above like love's bright tears.
Whole worlds of them appeared at length
Upon the skies—love's timeless seat.
Then, changed to fading stars—whose strength
Was spent by love's o'er sweet extent—
They met, as roaming lovers meet.
The full moon's softly glowing cheeks
So brightly faint, so faintly bright,
Flared to a rosy, blushing light
As when a lover his loved one seeks;
Seeing its image from above,
The moon dies slowly with self-love.
Shadows and lights gleam through a gap,
Cautiously creeping, nigh and nigh,
Embracing self, till by and by
They huddle close in twilight's lap,
And then in one with darkness merge.
With them the trees embrace and surge—
Where dusk and mountain tops entwine,
Sways pine with birch and birch with pine,
The speeding waves new waves submerge
Within the brook—All feel the urge
When love time comes, to seek love's shrine.
Within this rosy evening light,
A maiden rests beneath a tree,
Gazing where the lake and banks match might
And past them, far as the eye can see.
Beneath the hill, the lake shows blue,

Further streaked with a patch of green,
And further still, more green between,
Until all blends into a blue-green hue.
Across the restful evening lake
The maiden casts her tired gaze;
Across the restful evening lake
Now glitters the heaven's starry maze.
Like a fallen angel appears the maid,
Spring's amaranth, drooping in the shade.
Beauty still lingers in her cheeks.
The hour that took her dearest treasure
Wrote in her features much that speaks
About her sorrow's brimful measure.

The twentieth day sped by today.
And 'cross the land, dreams hold their sway.
The smouldering fires quickly die
Even upon the reddish sky
That stretches o'er the blue-black hills.
"He comes not!—He is gone for e'er!
I, whom he spurned, now face despair!"
A painful grief her soul o'er fills
While anguish grips the aching heart,
And with the water's mystic groans
Mingle the maiden's plaintive tones.
Reflected star lights seem to dart
Within her streaming starry tears.
Those burning sparks on her cheeks so cold
Dwindle and die like falling spheres,
And where they fall, all blossoms fold.

Look! As she flits now up and down;
She leans across the mountain's brim,

While the wind plays with her snow-white
gown.

Now she stares in the distance dim —
Then, brushing off a shining tear,
She shades her eyes, as if to peer
Into the far-off hazy brown,
Where toward the lake the mountains lean,
The waves reflect the sparkling sheen,
And playful stars each other drown.

Just as a snow-white dove appears
When flying 'neath a sunless cloud,
Or as a water-lily proud
The bluish surface domineers;
Thus — yonder where the mountains meet —
Over the waters something fleet
Approaches fast . . . A moment bright,
Then as a stork in a slow flight looms,
No longer a dove or the lilies' blooms,
Now a white sail rocks in the breeze.

A slender oar appears to tease
The churning waters, forming rings.
Each foaming ring an oar enslaves
While borne from skies on gilded wings,
Roses of gold ride on the waves.
"A rapid boat . . . it's near, it's near!
It's he; his plumage, flowers, cloak!"
The boat is fastened at the pier
And up the winding mountain lane
A sailor lightly guides his pace.
Flushed, crimson now the maiden's face.

Behind the oak she hides — to rest;
Advances — stops — springs forth again —
At length to fall upon his chest —
"But who is this?" The moon's bright spell
Illumines someone she knows well;
Her blood stream pauses and she shrieks
"Where's William?"

"List," the man implores,
And whispering he further speaks:
"Near yonder lake, a tower soars
High o'er the trees . . . its shadows cap
The restless waters' sleeping lap;
But deeper yet beneath the waves,
A casement lamp its light engraves:
Your William there now vainly seeks
To still his thoughts of Death's cold cheeks . . .
He learned his shame, learned of your guilt . . .
He slew the man you'll not bemoan,
His father . . . whom he had not known.
Revenge demands more blood be spilt . . .
Hence he must die . . . His peace be near.
When cheeks that now bloom as a rose
Shall fade and o'er the wheel appear,
And limbs shall feel the wheel's dread throes,
Thus he will die, who knew no fear.
For his disgrace and for your vice
Have world's disgrace . . . Be cursed thrice!"

He turns away . . . Then all is still;
At length, he clammers down the hill
Along the path, and finds his boat;
Swiftly he sails . . . as a stork in flight,

Then slowly passes out of sight
As a lily blossom set afloat.

The waves are quiet 'neath the darkened ledge,
Enwrapped within an azure cloak serene;
A sheer white dress floats on the water's edge,
While nature softly whispers: "Geraldine!"
And the waters' murmur: "Geraldine!"
"Geraldine!"

'tis late at eve—the first of May,
A night in May—'tis time for love,
A love's lure sings the turtle dove.
"Geraldine! Geraldine! Geraldine!"

PART TWO

A star fell from the heaven's heights,
A lifeless star that faintly glowed;
It falls to realms of endless nights,
Falls to its timeless, last abode.
Its plaint sounds from the tomb of all
Like shrieks of an unhappy soul.

"When will she end her ceaseless fall?"
Never — nowhere — an aimless goal.
About the white tower winds frolic at will,
While 'neath it the whispering ripples spill;
Upon the white wall, the moonlight bright
Pours out a flood of silvery light.
But deep 'neath the tower, 'tis dark and drear,
For there the moon-beams shining might
Flits through the casement bars in fear
To change into a part-lit night.
Into the dark, the columns stretch stark and
bare,
While the maddened wind that howls and
moans
Sounds through the jail like dead men's groans
And ruffles the captive's unkempt hair.
There, where the bleak stone table stands,
The prisoner rests a weary head,
He kneels, half leaning on his hands,
His mind each happy thought defies.
And in the clouds that span the moonlit waste,
The captive wraps his soul in furtive haste;
Each thought awakes new thought — and dies.

"Deep, silent night! With your black scorn
You hide the huts where I was born,
And where, I know she mourns for me!
She mourns? For me? — 'tis but a dream!
For her, I long have ceased to be.
Soon as tomorrow's rays will gleam
Above our woods, I shall atone
Upon the gallows for my crime.
And she'll rejoice as that first time
We met where smiling sunbeams shone."

He ceases — and the echoes cheer
The prison columns' outspread wing,
The vaulted ceiling, where they ring;
Until — as if they froze with fear,
Where ends the lengthy corridor,
The echoes sleep for evermore.

The profound stillness of the night
Brings back again time's endless chain,
And the captive sees his joys and plight
In troubled dreams return again.
These thoughts of youthful years of yore,
Tempt now anew his dreams' rich store;
While tears of longing fill his eyes,
His heart-beats drown in burdened sighs;
For worlds that passed, to be no more.

Where past the lake, a mountain range
Slopes toward the western level floor,
It seems that there, by fate beguiled
He plays again — a child once more.
As a child by father cast away
He grows with bandits, strange and wild;
Later he rules the outlaws' den,
Commits unheard of deeds of shame,
As the "Dreadful Forest Lord" whose name
Is widely known and feared by men.
His thwarted love for a withered rose
Incites him to a cruel plot,
And when her ravisher he knows,
He slays his father — knowing not.
For this he's in the prison cast
Before the gallows claim their toll;

And at the break of day at last
The "Forest Lord" will yield his soul.

Now, where the bleak stone table stands,
The prisoner rests a weary head,
He kneels, half leaning on his hands,
His mind each happy thought defies,
And in the clouds that span the moon-lit waste
The captive wraps his soul in furtive haste.
Each thought awakes new thought — and dies.

"Rival — my father! Killer — His son!
He — ravisher of my own true love!
Unknown to me — the deed I've done
Was two-fold vengeance from above.
Why did I, whom he cast away
Become the terror, fierce and fast?
Whose guilt shall erase the coming day?
Whose guilt this curse upon me cast?
Not my own guilt . . . This I can say.
Was I lured forth by life's false play
But to avenge my parent's wrong?
If, of my choice I took no breath,
Why must I die a cruel death?
Why must I die, so young — so long.
So young to die! — To have no choice!"
Dread's frenzy stills the captive's voice,
Between the walls — dark, drear and gray;
The shadows of the profound night
Now fill the cell with silent fright,
New dreams the captive's mind delay. . . .

"My love, my all! My Angel — all!
Why did she fall before we met?
Why did my father cause her fall?
My curse —" But grief within him set
Stills further words — He stands erect,
The dangling chains ring in the dark,
While out the cell his roaming gaze
Wanders beyond where the waters spark.
Clouds hide the full moon's yellow blaze,
Where shadows mountain tops enwrap,
And stars arise upon night's lap.
Upon the lake, the twinkling stars
Flitter about like a liquid light.
He keeps these changing sparks in sight
While sorrow grates his soul's fresh scars.
"How fair the night! How fair the skies!
Behold the play of light and shade.
And when 'tis day, my lifeless eyes
Shall see no more this verdant glade.
Just as the grayish cloud and haze
Their darkened wings still further spread,
Thus —" The captive falters, drops his gaze,
The clanging chains new echoes raise,
And then all's quiet, as if dead.

By now, from mount to mount the cloud —
Spread like the wings of a giant bird —
Sheathed the night within this shroud
And darkness filled the wide, wide world.
List! Past the hill, tones sweet and clear
Rise through the darkness of the night;
A trumpet fills the air with cheer,
Bringing forth music's soft delight.

All slumbers, hushed by these sweet tones,
Even the night-clad distance rests.
Beneath its spell the captive's moans
Have ceased, as he his grief forgets.
"How pleasant the life this sound awakes
Upon the sleeping, peaceful ground.
When time to wings tomorrow takes
My ears no more shall hear the quakes
And quivers of the trumpet's sound."
Again he falters — the clanging chain
Now fills the narrow prison cell;
Then all is quiet . . . Depths of pain
Have gripped his heart within their spell.
And far beyond, the trumpet's strain
Complains and dies upon the dell.

"The future time? — The coming day?
What follows? Is it a dream's wild fray
Or a slumber without any dreams?
Mayhap, a slumber in a way
Was the life I lived, and the coming day
Shall pass to other dreams and schemes?
Or what I longed for all my life
And found not in my earthly strife,
Will this the coming day expose?
Who knows? This no one, no one knows."

Again he's still . . . The quiet night
Casts all about its dark still wrap.
Gone is the full moon's shining might
And the twinkling stars . . . While on all sides
Black, frightful darkness now abides.
The dale yawns like a grave's wide gap.

Stilled is the wind . . . the water's drone . . .
Slumbers the trumpet's mellow tone.
While in the prison hallway sleeps
Hushed deathly silence and darkness creeps.
"Deep is the night — and dark the night.
A darker night awaits me still . . .
Away with thought" — and with all his might
He stills the thought against its will.

Deep, deathly silence. — From the wall
Each falling drop this peace defies
The sound of dripping drops of slime
Resounds throughout the prison walls,
As if it measured off night's time.
Resounds and dies — Resounds and dies —
Resounds — resounds — and dies in rhyme.
"How long the night! How long the night!
But a longer night awaits me still.
Away with thought" and with fear's own might
He stills the thought against its will.
Deep deathly silence. — Drops of slime,
Again, in falling, measure time.

"A darker night . . . for here at least
A moonbeam or some starlight creeps,
While there, but shadows hold their feast,
There ne'er a ray of sunlight sweeps,
Cold darkness lingers there.
There, all is one, no parts are shown —
All endless there — no time is known.
Night does not pass — day does not rise —
No time is known — no care —
There, seeds of hope are never sown.

And without end — into my eyes
Eternities now stare.
All is a void — high over me,
About me and deep under me —
Sheer void is yawning, bare;
An endless stillness — voiceless clime —
An endless space — and night — and time.
It is a dream of mortal ties,
The 'naught' known here, not there.
Before tomorrow's sunset dies
Led to this barren void, my eyes —"
He and his voice despair.

Lightly the waves play o'er the deep
And 'neath the tower, near the shore,
The whispering waves that churn and break,
Seem to have lulled the man to sleep,
Upon the stony prison floor.

The clanging din of falling chains
Awakes the warder, who, with a light,
Opens the cell — walks in — remains,
Disturbing not the captive's plight.
From post to post his lantern's rays
Destroy the hallway's cloak of night,
The beams grow dim and dim always
Till far away they lose their strength
And but an endless night at length
Conceals the rest from out of sight.
The captive's staring, rigid gaze
O'er shadowed with a cloudy haze
Sees nothing — staring into space.
Although the light from the warder's lamp

Spreads o'er his cheeks, cold, pale and damp,
And darkness leaves the dismal place.

There where the bleak stone table stands
The prisoner rests a weary head,
He kneels, half leaning on his hands.
Swooning again — half alive — half dead.
His feebly whispered voice reveals
The troubled dreams, his swoon conceals.

"My spirit — spirit — and my soul."
His feeble words thus slowly toll,
Across the lips, now tightly pressed.
Before the sounds can reach the ears
Each word thus spoken disappears;
A new thought dies, yet unexpressed.

The jailer nears him . . . pace by pace,
His lamp now lights the captive's face.
That haggard face — a frightful sight,
Motionless eyes that now appear
Fixed on some boundless, timeless sphere.
Tears, sweat and blood on cheeks alight;
Upon his lips, sleeps song's delight . . .

The jailer cautiously bends near,
Close to the captive's lips, his ear,
And as a breeze lulls o'er the dale
The captive whispers on his tale.
Nearer and nearer the jailer dips,
Closer and closer to the captive's lips,
Till lips and ear blend into one.
Each whispered sound now softly drips,

Then all is hushed — as if asleep.
The jailer stands — moves not — undone.
Large tears beneath his eyelids run
And eyes and heart with sorrow weep.
Long stands he, helpless to decide,
Till as a beast prepared to leap,
He leaves the cell with one long stride.
Long as he lived — his lips kept sealed
The secret he had heard revealed,
And ne'er again he wore with grace
A smile upon his furrowed face.

The jailer left — the shadow'd spell
Fills once again the prison cell.
Through night profound — the drops of slime
Again, in falling, measure time.

There where the bleak stone table stands,
The captive kneels — leans on his hands,
His haggard face — a frightful sight.
Motionless eyes that now appear
Fixed on some boundless, timeless sphere.
Tears, sweat and blood on cheeks alight,
And endlessly the drops of slime
Again, in falling, measure time.
The song of drops, the winds of night,
Foretell the unrelenting doom
Of him, whose failing reasons fled.
From far an owl hoots in dread,
At midnight, when the church-bells boom.

INTERMEZZO I

(MIDNIGHT)

Upon the spreading plains now sleeps the
pale moon light,
The mountain tops are dark, the star-lit lake
gleams bright,
Above the lake, rears a grassy mound.
High o'er this mound the gallows rise,
Topped by a skull with lifeless eyes,
And 'neath the gallows, on the ground
Swarm ghosts, deprived of mortal ties.

A Chorus of Ghosts:

"When midnight silence crowns the waves,
Wandering lights flit o'er the graves,
And with their deathly, bluish sheen,
They light the rigid, pallid mien
Of him who now the watch shall keep,*
Leaning against his cross of wood,
To guard this field of dreamless sleep.
A cloud across the zenith flies
And partly hides as with a hood
The moon, whose light falls on the eyes —
And thence upon the guard's clenched teeth,
Where the moonbeam finds its last retreat."

A Voice:

"The time is ripe! — Prepare the tent!
The 'Forest Lord' is to be sent
Into our fold the coming day."

A Chorus of Ghosts: (lowering the skull)

"From the land of death now speed away,
Regain new life and speak again,
Come be with us — a welcome guest.
For long, alone you stood the test,
Now someone else will take the reign."

The Skull: (twirling betwixt the ghosts)

"Within my limbs, a pain I feel;
Again as one I long to be.
What anguish in this mute appeal?
A new born dream now beckons me!"

A Voice:

"His tent is ready for the guest,
And when tomorrow's mid-night falls

* See Page 8.

We'll meet again, while night wind calls.
With honors he'll be laid to rest."

A Chorus of Ghosts:

"His tent is ready for the guest,
And when tomorrow's midnight falls,
We'll meet again, while night wind calls.
With honors he'll be laid to rest."

A Voice:

"Over the fields let my voice be heard,
At midnight he will be interred!
Let each one say what he will bring!"

The Gallows with the Wheel:

"The dead man's coffin I will be."

The Frogs in the Swamp:

"And we tomorrow's dirge shall sing."

The Gale over the Lake:

"Sad music, is a part of me."

The Moon in Zenith:

"I shall provide the pall of white."

The Fog in the Mountains:

"We'll bring the mourning veils in sight."

The Night:

"And I'll procure the robes of fear."

The Mountains:

"Give us the veils and the robes of night."

The Falling Dew:

"And I will lend each sparkling tear."

The Parched Land:

"I'll stir a scented column here."

The Falling Cloud:

"With rain I'll spray the black draped bier."

A Drooping Flower:

"The needed garlands I have tied."

A Balmy Breeze:

"I'll place them on the coffin there."

The Glow Worms:

"Our tiny lights will be our share."

The Booming Storm:

"I shall awake the drums' deep din."

A Mole Under the Ground:

"The grave my digging shall provide."

The Time:

"I'll spread the mound, the grave to hide."

*A Flock of Nocturnal Birds Flying
Across the Moon:*

"In time to feast we'll flutter in."

A Voice:

"With honored rites he'll pass away.
The fading moon now slowly dies,
And the morning star awakes the skies,
Again 'tis day! . . . Again 'tis day."

A Chorus of Ghosts:

"Again 'tis day . . . Again 'tis day."
(Disappear)

PART THREE

Beyond the hills, the rising day
Awakes the sleeping May-time dale,
While over forest, across the vale,
The mist-like dreams still roam and play.
The bluish fog from the darkened woods
Ascends towards faintly colored skies,
And even above the lake, like hoods,
The rocking blue-tinged vapors rise.

Along the lake, in the mountain's shadow,
Across the dale — far, far away,
Beyond the woods — 'twixt the field and
 meadow,
The manors' lengthy shadows sway.
Enormous as a shade of night
There stands upright beneath the skies,
The tallest of this tall array.

Just as the crimson sun swims into view,
Above the mountain tops' blue foggy flakes,
Then quickly every living thing awakes
And every creature finds day's joys anew.
The whiteness of the birds shatters the lake's
 green hue,
While the swiftly passing boats with quickly
 dipping oars,
Scatter in crimson bands the billows toward
 the shores.
A whispering grove of pines beckons above
 the lake,
Therein the thrush chants psalms and other
 birds sing out,
Mingling their songs with those of the maidens
 who roam about;
All living, breathing things, in the joys of May
 partake.
As a pleasing song now sounds the early morn-
 ing breeze,
Scattering the snow-white blooms over the ver-
 dant dale,
Guiding the flight of geese, as o'er the woods
 they sail,

While on the mountain-side it bends the new
grown trees.

The beauty of this morn, only one scene de-
stroys.

Where, into yonder lake projects the narrow
isle,

The shadows of whose towns and turrets high
and steep

Bathe in the greenish lap of the waters cool
and deep,

A din arises there, the morning to defile.

Through the city gates a throng crowds with a
rising noise.

From far, the people haste — still larger grows
the throng,

Then larger, larger grows this seething regi-
ment;

Till countless is the mass — The throng grows
more intent.

A man about to die will pass here before long.

An army regiment now marches through the
gate,

Leading with measured stride to his relentless
fate,

The man condemned to die for an unpardoned
wrong.

A while the throng is hushed — but soon be-
gins again

And many a voice is raised to an excited
strain;

"It's he! It's he! The plumage, the wreath,
The hat, the eye that sparkles beneath.
It is his cloak. It's he! It's he! 'The Dreadful
Forest Lord.'"

Impatiently thus shouts the restless, crowding
horde.

As the stormy waters, grows the din on every
side

Rising with every step of the captive's weary
stride.

Around him crowds the mob — as when clouds
obscure the skies,

Like a passing lightning flash, the weapons
gleam in the sun.

Slowly the doomed man walks, to earth are
fixed his eyes.

The church bells ring the while for him, prays
every one.

Above the lake's green banks stretches a grassy
knoll,

A pole upon it stands, a torture wheel its crown.

A steep sloped hill nearby towers above the
pole,

And from its highest peak the chapel's sha-
dows frown.

With a measured stride the group reaches the
chapel's side:

The soldiers step away — the captive stands
there free.

He is led out once more this nature's shrine
to see,

Once more to gaze upon the mountains far
and wide
Where, as a care-free lad, he spent his youth-
ful days;
Once more led out beneath the heaven's rosy
lap
Led where the morning lights the chapel walls
enwrap,
Brought out to offer there the Heavenly Lord
his praise.
The din and whispering stops — the multitude
is stilled,
For the hearts of humbled men with grief are
over-filled,
And toward the wretched one their sympathies
go out.
The throng with tear-filled eyes gazes upon
the plain
Where the captive, looking over nature's wide
domain
Humbled before his God — stands in a prayer
devout.

The risen sunshine's crimson streaks
Color the captive's ashen cheeks,
And from his far-fixed, saddened eyes,
The falling tears, the sunshine dries.
A blossoming dale he sees beneath,
Encircled by a mountain's wreath,
And by a wreath that the forests make . . .
Peacefully sleeps the shining lake
Amidst the calm that this beauty brings.

Beneath the hills, the lake shows blue,
Further streaked with a patch of green,
And further still, more green between,
Until all blends into a green-blue hue.
The manors stretching in endless rings
Extend around each lake-side nook.
Within the lake, the birds' white flocks,
And fleeting boats where'er you look.
Until the lake and the hill-side rocks
On the far horizon slope to meet.
The snow-white manors and the sails,
The birds, the town, the towers steep,
The knoll, the mount where the mist prevails,
All these are plunged beneath the deep
Wherein their images repeat.
Where in the distance, a mountain bluff
Burdens the bank from high above,
There spreads an old tree, gnarled and rough,
An aged-oak — There never more
Will come that happy time of yore
When love's lure sang the turtle dove.
Nearby protrudes a grassy knoll,
Upon which stands a wheel and pole . . .
Along the mountain, drear and blue,
A pine grove hums its mournful woe . . .
The sunshine floods the dale with glow
And a morning May spreads sparkling dew.

All this the captive sees before his eyes,
All this he sees once more before he dies,
And a piercing sorrow overcomes his heart:
He deeply sighs — tear quickly follows tear,

Once more his gaze is wandering far and near,
Then toward the skies his roaming glances dart.
Upon this bluish dome, white vapors slowly die,
As with the winds they play and prance;
And high above toward the far off lands,
White cloudlets o'er the distant heavens fly,
And thus the grieving captive speaks to them:
"You, who with a far-reached flight all distance

stem,

And as with mystic arms embrace all earth,
You molten stars and shadows of heavens blue,
You mourners who, when sadness captures you,
Dissolve as into silent sparkling tears,
You are the envoys chosen by my hand.
Where'er you float upon your far-off course
Before at length you've reached your distant
shores

Along your journey, greet my native land.
My loved country, beautiful and fair,
My cradle and my grave, my mother's care,
The only soil of which I am an heir,
My native realm that stretches over there.
When in your flight you'll see a mountain high
Projecting out the lake — there a maid with fly-
ing hair —"

He ceases while burning tears pour out each
saddened eye.

Then from the mount the soldiers and their prey
March o'er the path, where new-grown trees
abound,

Lower and low, till they have reached the
mound.

Again the din subsides, slowly to die away.

The stolid headsman stands, prepared with a
sword in hand,
Once more the captive turns his tearful gaze,
Looks all about, sighs deeply as in a daze.
His gaze drops down — awaiting death's near
end.
He bares his throat — then slowly his bosom
bares,
Kneels down — a pause — while the headsman
self prepares —
Then gleams the blade — quickly the heads-
man leaps,
Blade strikes the wheel — once more the cap-
tive stares —
The head falls down — the blade yet deeper
steeps —
And the headless body slumps into the grass.
His loved country, beautiful and fair,
His cradle and his grave, his mother's care,
The only soil of which he is an heir,
His native realm that stretches over there.
His mother's land — receives the bloody mass.

Limb after limb they broke — till the doomed
man's tortured frame
They forced upon the wheel, designed dead
men to maim.
Till his head, that first fell down, over the
wheel top soared;
Thus ended were the days of the "Dreadful
Forest Lord."
Upon his lifeless cheeks now sleeps a final
dream.

Gazing upon him they passed, an endless star-
ing stream,

A countless multitude that stood about the rise
And not until the sun, upon its westward course
Smiled joyfully upon the dead head's lifeless
eyes,

Was stilled the noise and din along the lake's
dark shores.

Above the distant mount, the sun flamed ere
it sank;

And on this stillness deep, white moonlight cast
its streaks,

Pouring its silver light about those lifeless
cheeks,

And o'er the now stilled mound that stands
above the bank,

The cities are far away, as the clouds upon the
skies,

Beyond them, far beyond, now stare the lifeless
eyes,

To a land of childhood days — a wondrous,
wondrous age!

His youth was swept away by time's relentless
rage.

Far away fled its dream, dead as a lifeless
shade,

Reflections of cities white, that in the lake now
bathe.

Just as a final thought of men who died before,
Just as their very names, as battles of ancient
hordes,

Just as the northern light, whose dead flame
shines no more,
Tones of an age-warped harp, sounds of its
shattered chords,
Events of by-gone days, the light of a lifeless
star,
Feelings of one you loved, a wanderer's path
so far,
A grave long since forgot, eternities' old scar,
A smold'ring fire's smoke, sounds of metallic
chimes,
These are the echoes now of the dead man's
childhood times.

'tis late at eve — second of May
A night in May — 'tis time for love
A love lure sings the turtle-dove.
"William! William! William!"

INTERMEZZO II

Where two mountain ranges tower
'twixt the two a cloud is stealing,
Like a darkened vaulted ceiling,
Like the heaven's lone beholder.
And the dale is at this hour
Quiet as a graveyard bower.

Where the darkest clouds have gathered
And the mountain region changes,
There protrude two mighty boulders
Like a pair of massive shoulders,
Set beneath the mountain ranges;
Over these the clouds are scattered
Thus a narrow entrance making.
Close beyond this portal gathered
Crimson flames that are swiftly breaking,
And within their band of brightness
That is ever westward spreading,
Birds of night with eerie lightness
Flit across this crimson glimmer.
Then, as toward the gateway heading,
They fly off and slowly vanish.
And the flame grows dimmer — dimmer,
Till with dew of night aweeping,
Endless skies all gladness banish,
Earth and self in sadness steeping.

Within the cool dale's darkened lap,
Where aged oak trees form a gap,
A grieving chorus sits around;
All wrapped within their cloaks of white.
They are the comrades of the night.
Each gazes ahead at the dark, still ground.
Without words and without motion
As if fear's relentless ocean
Changed them into lifeless molds.
As an evening song unfolds,
Softly whisp'ring — softly sighing
Thus the circle trembles gravely,

With an endless whisper crying:
"Our mighty Leader perished."

As a wind that howls and bounds,
O'er the rigid circle sounds,
"Our mighty Leader perished."

As the whispering of the trees
'neath the mount, where echoes moan,
Thus resounds upon the breeze
In an unchanged monotone:
"Our mighty Leader perished."

Distant forests faintly shiver,
And lamenting voices quiver:
"Our beloved Master perished."



PART FOUR

Beautiful May sped by . . . and died the
blooms of Spring,
And Summer flared anew — then passed fair
Summer time.
Autumn and Winter came . . . Another Spring's
warm clime,
Till many, many years passed by, on Time's
fleet wing.

'twas near the seventh year, the passing year's
last day.
Then came a silent night. At twelve, the new-
born Year
Began its halting step . . . Dreams held their
nightly sway.
Only the sound of hoofs resounded — clanging
clear.
Only my horses' hoofs . . . Toward the town I
rode at night,
And paused beneath the mound upon which
stood the tent
On which the "Forest Lord" life's ebbing
strength had spent.
William's skull I saw, where fell the dim moon-
light.
Across the midnight land, far as the eye can fall,
Over the dale and hills, o'er forest, lake and
field,
A pall of snow was stretched, its whiteness cov-
ering all,
It covered the skull and wheel as with a white,
cold shield.
The moon, as in a swoon, dragged 'cross the
midnight skies,
At times the owl screeched, the night wind
madly moaned
And with the wind, the skull rattled and weirdly
groaned
Till fear set on my horse and stared into my
eyes.
Then with a fervid haste toward the nearest
town I sped

Where I asked, the coming day, about the skull
I found;
An aged innkeeper just pointed to the mound
And told the tale I've told, . . . the tale of the
man long dead.

Again life's changing course, led me into the
world,
Many a stormy whirl dragged me to depths of
grief,
But as if drawn by force, wherever I was hurled,
Each Spring I came upon this mound for a mo-
ment brief.
And with the setting sun I sat upon the mound,
Above me the wheel and pole — the bones
and age-bleached skull;
With saddened eyes I gazed upon the Spring-
born ground,
And on the mountain tops, wrapped in a foggy
hull.

Again 'twas evening — first of May —
A night in May — 'twas time for love:
A love lure sang the turtle dove
Where scented pine groves stretched away.
The tranquil moss sighed love's lament,
Love's sorrow shammed the blooming tree,
A nightingale sang love's melody,
While a rose replied with love's sweet scent.
The lake, hid where the thicket reared
Expressed its grief in a muffled sound
Where the banks entwined it all around,
As if embracing, they appeared.

About the skull, the sun's last glare
Encircled itself as a rosy wreath,
Coloring the skull, now bleak and bare,
Coloring the flesh, the chin beneath,
While through the skull the winds pranced in
play
As if the dead man laughed his way.
Here and there fluttered in the air
On the skull long forgotten hair,
And dewy drops gleamed forth below
As if the skull's unseeing eyes,
Gazing where evening beauty lies,
Were moved to tears of mournful woe.

Thus sat I there, till the moonlight touched the
peaks,
Rendering paler still the skull's and my own
cheeks.
Its whiteness spreading out, as the whiteness
of the snow,
Across the dale and woods, o'er mountains
high and low.
From time to time, disturbed by a distant cuck-
oo's call
The sleeping dell awakes while the hooting owl
resounds;
From out the nearby yards, dog's barkings rise
and fall.
Around the arid knoll, a spicy scent abounds,
While spread about the mound, sleeps a fra-
grant floweret:
On the distant lake, a light its mystic beams
compounds,

And glow worms flutter by, as stars that quickly
set,
Playing about the wheel, flying in glistening
spheres.
At times upon the skull a glow worm sets its
wings,
Quickly to fly away, to vanish as fallen tears.

And in my saddened eyes, two burning tears
delayed,
As the sparks upon the lake, upon my checks
they played.
For my own fleeting years, years of my child-
hood age,
My youth was swept away by time's relentless
rage,
Far away fled its dream, dead as a lifeless
shade,
Reflections of cities white that in the lake now
bathe.
Just as a final thought of men who died before,
Just as their very names, as battles of ancient
hordes,
Just as the northern light, whose dead flame
shines no more,
Tones of an age-warped harp, sounds of its
shattered chords,
Events of by-gone days, the light of a lifeless
star,
Feelings of one you loved, a wanderer's path
so far,
A grave long since forgot, eternities old scar,

A smould'ring fire's smoke, sounds of metallic
chimes,
A dying swan's last song, paradise gone away,
Thus fled my childhood days.

But in these changing times
Days of my vanished youth — are like this song
of May . . .
Just like a night in May, where the barren moun-
tains part;
A smile upon my lips, a sorrow in my heart.

See yonder wanderer upon the grassy lane,
Hastening toward his goal, ere the sunset dies
again?
This wanderer in life you shall see never more,
Once he had passed the hill, you'll search for
him in vain,
Oh never — never again! That holds my life in
store.
To my grief-aching heart, who can some solace
give?
Without an end is love . . . A blighted love
I live!

'tis late at eve . . . first day of May,
A night in May . . . 'tis time for love.
A love lure sings the turtle dove.
"Hynek — William — Geraldine."

